
Editorial

We join Dr. Nurit Neustadt in welcoming you to *IJOM*'s fourth volume. Her reflections on the history of our profession and its major international gatherings are particularly apposite on the eve of IMC14, as is her call to share ideas and innovate to provide significant and relevant mobility opportunities to people with vision impairment.

This volume of *IJOM* presents a diverse range of topics from such technical O&M papers as those on Trekker Breeze 2.0, scooter travel, and a novel navigation device; to Wolf Wolfensberger's Social Role Valorization (SRV) principle; and consideration of the 'argy-bargy' games played by stakeholders when new monies become available to finance new O&M service developments. Although perhaps appearing disjointed, the topics are inextricably interlinked. That is, the technical O&M focus requires constant mindfulness of SRV principles to ensure the delivery of high levels of O&M service. As well, in order that O&M services exist for clients with vision impairment, games of 'argy-bargy' need to conclude with stakeholder agreement on issues of policy implementation and the funding of service roll-out.

Specifically, the lead article by Yeung, La Grow, Towers, Alpass, and Stephens investigates the extent to which a variety of such factors as ability to get around, as well as a variety of concomitant health conditions affect quality of life (QOL) among ageing people who have difficulty seeing. The study confirms that O&M skills are of central importance to the vision rehabilitation

programs designed to enhance QOL in older persons.

Issues of client-centredness are investigated by Koda, Morioka, Kubo, Wada, Yoshikawa, Nakamura, and Shinoda. Their research focuses on the reasons why potential guide dog users in Japan are not applying for guide dogs. Those researchers offer a range of solutions that if implemented might increase guide dog applications.

The use of guide dogs as a mobility tool is largely accepted throughout the world. However, scooter travel for people who are vision impaired remains a contentious issue among health professionals. Deverell considers issues surrounding scooter travel, and confirms that a majority of O&M instructors in Australasia is already involved in scooter assessment or training of clients with low vision. The degree to which assessment and training are conducted adequately is also addressed.

Orientation and mobility is often approached technically with emphasis on functional improvement. However, both Kendrick and Armstrong in their respective discussion of Social Role Valorization remind the reader that the technical approach to O&M can often be too narrow. In addition to teaching the technical aspects of O&M, instructors could pursue with the client improved mobility with the further agenda of seeking changed life circumstances for that person towards promotion of a fuller and more satisfying life.

Silveira and Steer discuss the ways that disability policy implementation works and reveals strategies employed by stakeholders

to undermine policy implementation processes. The authors suggest that stakeholders must remain mindful of setting goals that will ultimately benefit clients requiring O&M services.

Deverell proposes a six step Environmental Complexity Scale which recognises that O&M is a dynamic interplay between physical, social, and sensory elements. This Complexity Scale might provide a standardised measure that might potentially be used to improve, for example, client travel performance; and facilitate research that seeks to demonstrate the effectiveness of O&M services; or support O&M funding applications.

Wood's describes a client trial of the most recent version of the GPS device Trekker Breeze (2.0). All clients agreed that version 2.0 was an improvement from the first version as well as considering the aid secondary to a long cane or guide dog.

Holmes describes an echolocation training package that contains seven modules designed to assist mobility instructors in teaching clients this important skill. The package includes advice on specific training areas as well as echolocation and O&M-related activities.

Finally, Hoefer describes his development of a hand-mounted sonar navigation device designed for affordability and replication. It is the technologist's intention that this device will eventually become available as

a 'kit' that can be assembled and customised to the requirements of an individual client.

The diverse range of papers in this volume is a testament to the continued evolution of O&M as a profession. O&M professionals must of course continue to consider the place of technology within O&M and its many applications. However, equally important is the need for reflection about the impact of O&M on a client's quality of life, and the importance of tailoring O&M services to meet individual clients' needs.

**Desirée Gallimore Ph.D. and
Mike Steer Ph.D.**

Editorial Note

- (1) In recognition of the passing of Dr. Wolf Wolfensberger 27th February 2011. Dr. Wolfensberger introduced the principle Normalization to a North American audience, and later refined and redefined it as Social Role Valorization. These principles have both exerted a major influence on disability practice and policy in developed countries and continue to have a positive impact on the lives of all people with disabilities, as well as those of us considered a part of minorities living among the majority.
- (2) Special thanks to Ms Mardi Kent for her highly specialised editorial assistance with this volume of *IJOM*.